VISIT…

TIGER'S PALACE

A short adventure for four 9th- or 10th-level PCs

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Bhishana Bhaga is an old rakshasa searching for a comfortable place to retire. No fool, she knows she must find a place secluded from the eyes of civilization to have any hope of escaping constant battle with the forces of good. She also wants a place that allows her to live in the rich manner she has become accustomed to, able to support one or more guardians and near some form of settlement to provide her with amusements. Bhishana Bhaga has finally found a locale she likes —a small gnomish mine deep in a mountain range.

Making a pact with a metal-hungry delver named CrushStone to guard her new home, the rakshasa has driven out most of the gnomes and begun to make preparations for her occupancy. Taking the form of an elf maiden, she ordered rich furnishings and decorations to make the mine an underground palace. The Bhishana Bhaga has also charmed the gnomes she's captured and convinced them to build traps to protect her home from unwanted intruders. Eventually she'll hire more expert artisans to build truly formidable defenses, making her underground home a fortress as well as a palace. If she is to be rooted out of these mountains and the mine returned to the gnomes, the best time to do it is now.

PREPARATION

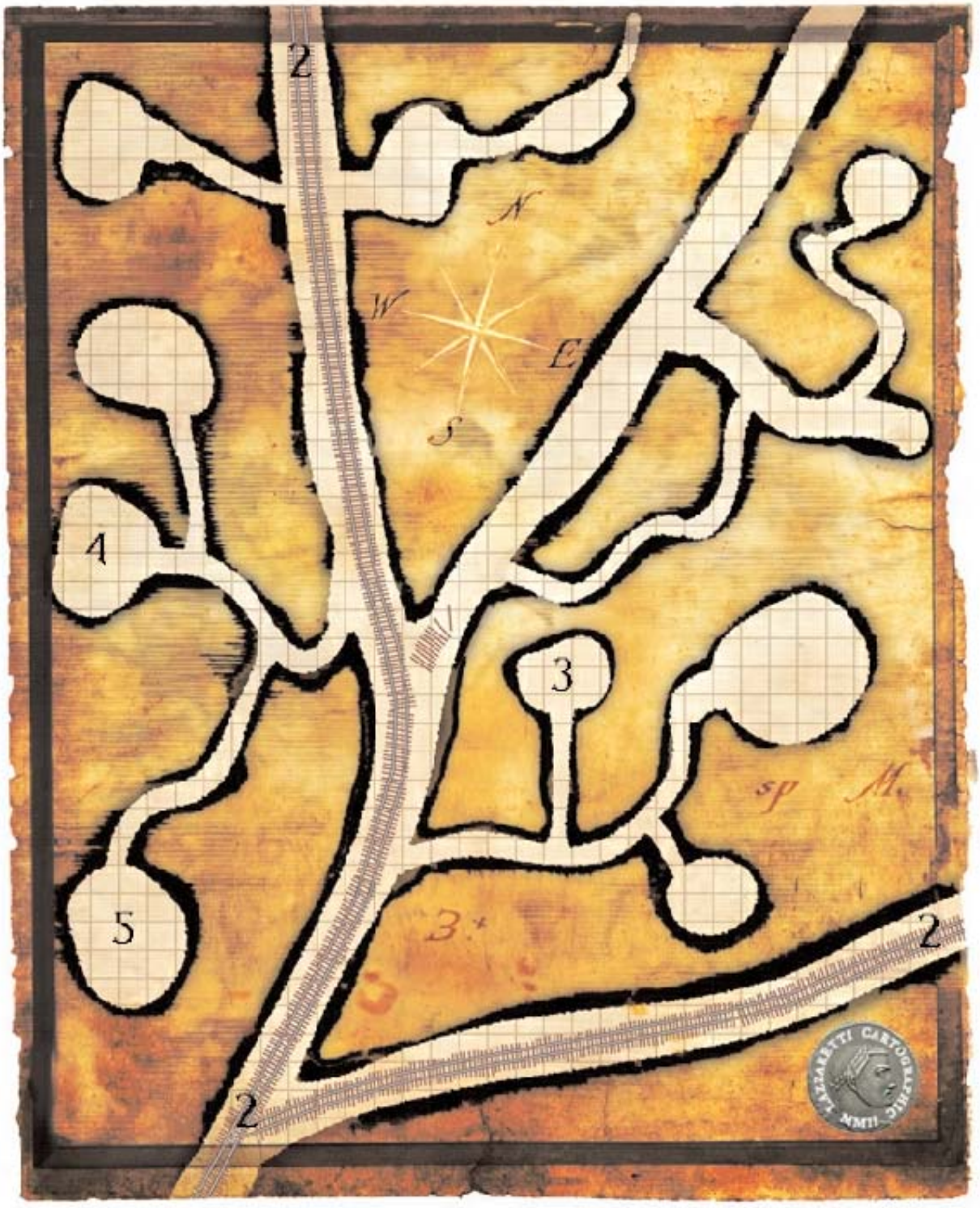
You, the Dungeon Master (DM), need a copy of the *Player's Handbook*, the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*, and the *MONSTER MANUAL*® to use this adventure.

Text that appears in shaded boxes is player information, which you may read aloud or paraphrase when appropriate. Unshaded boxes contain important information for you, including special instructions. Monster and NPC statistics are provided with each encounter in abbreviated form or, where appropriate, the proper page in the *MONSTER MANUAL* is referenced.

Tiger's Palace uses a modified version of the Old Mines map from the February 14, 2002, Map-a-Week feature on the D&D® website. The original version of the map is available for you to download at <http://www.wizards.com/dnd/images/mapofweek/Dungeon2_aql1_72.jpg>. The modified map is reprinted on the next page for your convenience.

CHARACTER HOOKS

Tiger's Palace can be either a site-based adventure the characters simply stumble across or the final climactic confrontation with Bhishana Bhaga, if she's been a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recurring villain in your campaign. Though designed to be set in a mountainous region near a gnomish community, it can be moved to any area likely to support a mine, and the gnomes can easily be swapped out for any humanoid race (perhaps even evil humanoids, though Bhishana is likely to keep them charmed anyway). Several possible character hooks appear below.

- The mines Bhishana Bhaga has chosen are famous for providing high-quality ores, including mithral. While the local gnomes are too terrified to act against Bhishana directly, the smiths in far off cities who depend on these ores for their businesses want to know why the supply has dried up. They are offering a 2,000 gp award to anyone who can restore the precious flow of metals.
- A retired adventurer who hunted but never caught Bhishana has found her lair, but is no longer young enough to face her himself. He may be an old contact of the characters or simply someone who has heard of their exploits. Either way he contacts them and asks for their help.
- The company that has been hired to ship thousands of gold pieces' worth of high-quality accouterments and furnishings is concerned about the safety of their shipments in a wild region of the mountains. The firm hires the characters to check out the point of delivery before it ships the precious goods.
- The folk in the town where the gnomish miners live are worried about the disappearance of 10 of their miners (whom Bhishana has charmed). They contact the heroes to ask them to investigate the mines where their loved ones were last seen.
- While exploring a different section of underground caverns, the characters come upon a cross-shaft that leads to Bhishana's lair.
- Bhishana actually invites the characters to come deal with her if they dare, as a way of testing her current defenses.

MINE ENCOUNTERS

The mine itself is unlit, though there are empty torch sconces and lamp-hooks set every 100 feet or so. Be sure you know how the characters are illuminating their way, and keep track of those light sources if they get separated. The map's scale is 1 square = 5 feet.

1. The Mine Tracks

It doesn't matter which set of tracks the characters follow into Bhishana Bhaga's lair. When the characters enter the tracked mine shaft read or paraphrase this text.

> The mine shaft is narrow, long, and dark. The smell of rock and stale air assaults your nostrils as a slow breeze drifts toward you from the depth of the shaft. It goes on for as far as the eye can see, with a sturdy set of cart tracks stretching out along the floor. The shaft is only 10 or 12 feet wide, and the tracks take up the middle 6 feet of that. The ceiling is rough-hewn rock 10 feet from the ground, and thick oak braces are set every 20 feet. Though you hear no noise coming from the depths of the corridor, every noise you make echoes quietly off into the blackness ahead.

From the outside the mine shaft the characters should travel 2,000 feet before reaching the map. If the PCs come from some other underground area they should encounter the cart tracks a similar distance from the map.

2. Mine Cart Trap

All the entrances to this section of the mine have been trapped. Miner's carts filled with concentrated alchemist's fire (which the gnomes used to blow up large rocks when expanding the mine) have been rigged to hurl down the shaft when someone applies 50 lb. or more to a pressure plate.

Once someone has triggered the trap, a Listen check (DC 15) allows a character to realize something is hurtling down the mine shaft in time to take a partial action. At the end of that surprise round of action, the cart arrives at the point where the pressure plate was set off and explodes. If stopped for any reason before reaching that point, the cart explodes where it stopped.

Mine Cart Trap: CR 8; Cart filled with concentrated alchemist's fire (12d6, 20 ft. radius); Reflex save (DC 17) halves damage; Search (DC 21); Disable Device (DC 25).

Note: The pressure plate that activates this trap counts as a stonework trap for purposed of a dwarf's stonecunning ability.

3: CrushStone's Lair

CrushStone—a young, overconfident delver—makes his home in a cave fairly near the tracked mine shaft. When the PCs find his lair, read or paraphrase the following information:

Crushstone's Tactics

CrushStone is a sad example of a delver in many ways. He has become addicted to the taste of valuable metals, which led him to invade the gnomes' mine in search of gold, mithral, and silver. When he encountered Bhishana Bhaga, she offered to feed him the metals he craved (in small amounts) in return for his services as a guard. CrushStone now sees Bhishana as his only source for these metals and would rather die than disappoint her. Offers to bribe him with any metal other than mithral automatically fail, but the presence of that precious material is enough to allow a character to make a Diplomacy (or perhaps Bluff) check to negotiate with the delver.

If CrushStone hears the explosion of the mine cart (encounter 1), he moves as quietly as possible toward the noise. Should he spot the characters before they see him (which is very likely if they have a light source), he moves to a side passage and covers it with softened earth using his stone shape ability. After the characters pass his position (any dwarf gets a stonecunning-based Search check to spot the new wall covering the delver's hiding place), CrushStone moves out and attacks from behind.

If CrushStone doesn't hear the explosion (likely if the characters bypass the trap) he remains in his lair until he senses them with tremorsense. Under this circumstance CrushStone trundles out to attack the PCs more directly. Once he starts fighting, he makes sure to hit every armored target once before concentrating on any one of them (giving his acid the best chance to eat through each foe's armor). If possible the delver stays in corridors no wider then himself, to prevent enemies from reaching his flanks (and hopefully preventing sneak attacks). If you want CrushStone to have a few tunnels ready to retreat to (a common delver tactic), simply pick one or more of the side-passages and note that it has a 1- or 2-inch covering of thin rock over the entrance.

XP Adjustment: If the delver has a chance to ambush the party, or if you've decided to give it a few bolt-holes, grant an additional 25% experience award to parties that overcome it under these more difficult circumstances.

The rock passageway opens into a large round room, with the ceiling stretching to a height of 20 feet above you. Though clearly made of stone, the room is textured as if it were molded out of wet clay, with many rounded edges and curved depressions. There are no sharp protrusions or flat surfaces in the whole room, giving it an appearance quite distinct from the rest of the mine complex. There is also a lingering corrosive scent, as though the whole room had recently been bathed in a weak acid.

In the unlikely event the characters surprise CrushStone (only likely if the entire group is flying or otherwise avoiding his tremorsense), add the following description and allow the PCs a surprise round.

In the center of the room lies an enormous, glistening mass of dark ooze. Before you can determine what the mass is it shifts, bringing two huge clawed flippers and a large black eye to bear on you.

Crush Stone: Male delver; CR 9; Huge aberration; HD 15d8+75; hp 142; Init +5; Spd 30 ft., burrow 10 ft.; AC 14, touch 9, flat-footed 13; Atk +17 melee (1d6+8 plus 2d6 acid, 2 slams); Face/Reach 10 ft. by 20 ft./10 ft.; SA acid; SQ acid immunity, corrosive slime, darkvision 60 ft., stone shape, tremorsense; AL NE; SV Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +11; Str 27, Dex 13, Con 21, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Hide –7, Intuit Direction +9, Knowledge (geology) +9, Listen +13, Move Silently +19, Spot +13; Alertness, Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative, Power Attack.

Acid (Ex): Each of Crush Stone's slam attacks deals an additional 2d6 points of acid damage.

Corrosive Slime (Ex): Crush Stone produces a mucuslike slime that contains a highly corrosive substance. The slime is particularly effective against stone. Crush Stone's mere touch deals 2d6 points of acid damage to organic creatures or objects. Against metallic creatures or objects, the slime deals 4d8 points of damage, and against stony creatures (including earth elementals) or objects, it deals 8d10 points of damage. Crush Stone's slam attack leaves a patch of slime that deals 2d6 points of damage on contact and another 2d6 points of damage in each of the next two rounds. A large quantity (at least a quart) of water or weak acid, such as vinegar, washes off the slime. An opponent's

armor and clothing dissolve and become useless immediately unless the wearer succeeds at a Reflex save (DC 22) Any weapon that strikes Crush Stone also dissolves immediately unless the wielder succeeds at a Reflex save (DC 22). A creature attacking Crush Stone with natural weapons takes damage from the slime each time its attacks hit unless it succeeds at a Reflex save (DC 22).

Stone Shape (Ex): Crush Stone can alter his slime to temporarily soften stone instead of dissolving it. Once every 10 minutes, he can soften and shape up to 25 cubic feet of stone as though by a *stone shape* spell (caster level 15th).

Tremorsense (Ex): Crush Stone can automatically sense the location of anything within 60 feet that is in contact with the ground.

4. The Workroom

When not preparing her new lair, the 10 gnome miners Bhishana has under her thrall with the *charm monster* spell generally stay in a workroom in one of the caves not far from the main shaft. When the PCs enter the workroom area, read or paraphrase the following information:

> This room looks obviously lived in, with piles of rags scattered around for makeshift beds and some supplies rotting in a corner. But it looks more like a prison than a place where any self-respecting creature would choose to dwell. The smell of thick perfume is strong, but not quite strong enough to overcome the scent of musty clothes and unwashed bodies.
>
> A group of gnomes huddles in the center of the room, obviously beaten and mistreated but not bound in any way. As soon as they spot you, the gnomes cry out softly:
>
> "You must flee and leave us to our fate! There is a great undead creature in the chamber beyond, a husk that was once a powerful sorcerer. If you remain, it will destroy us all!"

Gnomes: hp 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 5, 5, 4, 4, 3; see MM, page 106.

5. The Sanctum

Bhishana Bhaga stays in this bedroom when not working, so this is where the PCs most likely will find her if they surprise her. She'd prefer not to fight in here but doesn't hold back if pressed.

> Another cave opens out from the corridor, but one much more clearly designed for comfort. The walls have been painted with bright murals in red, gold, and silver. A thick mat of woven grass covers the floor, making it soft to walk across and decorating it with complex, swirling patterns. From the ceiling hang numerous brass hooks and fixtures, though there is no sign of what the hooks are meant to hold. A large four-post bed sits in the middle of the room with a desk, wardrobe and several comfortable chairs against the back wall.

Trap

The wardrobe in the back of the sanctum is a locked (DC 35 to open). A trap on the lock jabs a spring-loaded, poisoned blade at anyone opening it without using the key. The key is located in a hidden compartment in the right bedpost of Bhishana's headboard (Search DC 25 to find).

Poisoned Needle Trap: CR 9; +16 melee (1d4) plus poison (1d6 Con/2d6 Con); Fort save (DC 20) resists; Search (DC 24); Disable Device (DC 28).

Treasure

The wardrobe contains several sacks of coins and a few gems and art pieces Bhishana hasn't decided where to put yet. (She's waiting for her furnishings to arrive before decorating with her valuables). The coins are divided into four bags, one with 200 cp, one with 480 sp, one with 500 gp, and one with 130 pp. A fifth bag holds five brilliantly polished teardrop-shaped bloodstones (50 gp each) and a single golden amethyst with dark and light veins that give it a tiger-striped appearance (500 gp). Loose in the cabinet shelves are two cloth-of-gold tapestries depicting scenes of ornate gardens (1,050 gp each), an ebony jewelry box inlaid with tiny rubies and pearls (2,100), and a set of silver table-

DM's Note

If Bhishana has heard the PCs coming, she may be in this room disguised as one of the gnomes. See her tactics note in encounter 5 below. The gnomes have been told to make the claim about a lich to anyone who arrives—it's Bhishana's way of getting potential attackers off their guard. If pressed for more information, the gnomes make up details as best they can, but are unlikely to pass a Sense Motive check.

The gnomes are convinced Bhishana is their friend and are will not betray her, but they aren't fighters. Even if Bhishana is directly attacked, they do little more than cry out for the heroes to stop attacking their protector.

Bhishana Bhaga's Tactics

It's important to remember that Bhishana Bhaga is an old and cunning creature, well aware of both her strengths and her weaknesses. She never engages in combat without her *protection from arrows* spell for fear of blessed crossbow bolts (any bolt which fails to penetrate her DR from that spell is not considered a hit—it must inflict at least 1 hit point of damage to slay her). She knows that many weapons and most spells cannot harm her, so she attacks targets that can damage her in preference over any others.

On the other hand, Bhishana has no intention of giving up her new home if she can avoid doing so. Having made an arrangement for the delver to protect her, she assumes it can handle any intrusion she overhears. As a precaution she does cast a few long-duration spells if she hears fighting elsewhere in the mine (*cat's grace* and *protection from arrows,* most importantly), but generally ignores it until it sounds as though CrushStone has fled or failed.

If possible, Bhishana moves to attack the invaders before they come near her sanctum, and leads them away from her home. She may even try to take them past the mine cart trap on whatever path they didn't use to reach her (Bhishana knows well where the pressure plate is, and automatically avoids it). If the party looks too weak to face her in combat, she either moves in to finish them off or offers to let them go in return for an appropriate tribute (something worth at least 5,000 gp).

If it becomes clear to Bhishana Bhaga that invaders will reach her inner sanctum, she instructs the charmed gnomes to huddle in the main room and assumes a gnomish form herself. When the characters arrive, the gnomes are to falsely warn them of a powerful lich resting in the back room. After observing the characters for a few rounds, she attempts to charm (using *charm monster*) the one that seems most likely to be a healer. If she succeeds she'll attack the other characters, going for anyone with a crossbow first, then concentrating on any other healers, and then on weapon-wielding combatants. Since she's all but immune to damaging spells, she ignores enemy spellcasters other than healers unless they make themselves obvious targets.

Bhishana always casts *protection from arrows* before any other spell, generally following it up with *haste* (allowing her to get off two spells a round, or one spell and an attack, in the following rounds), *shield,* and *cat's grace*. She then casts one spell attack and makes one melee attack each round. If she is overmatched in melee combat, she uses her extra partial action to cast *true strike*, then uses Power Attack and Expertise to boost both her Armor Class and damage done. (If Bhishana hits often without causing enough damage, she can use Expertise to give her +5 AC and Power Attack for +14 damage, canceling out the +20 bonus from *true strike* and still hitting with her normal attack bonus for one blow).

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ware including an ewer (55 gp); 12 diner plates (30 gp each); 12 sets of two forks, three knives, and two spoons (35 gp per set); and four serving plates (60 gp each).

If for some reason Bhishana Bhaga wasn't ready for visitors, her *potion of charisma* and two scrolls of *dispel magic* are in the wardrobe as well. Bhishana always keeps her *+2 ring of protection* on her.

Bhishana Bhaga: Female advanced rakshasa; CR 11; Medium-size outsider (evil, lawful); HD 14d8+42; hp 133; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 23, touch 14, flat-footed 21; Atk +15 melee (1d4+1, claw) and +10 melee (1d6, bite); SA Spells; SQ Alternate form, detect thoughts, DR 20/+3, outsider traits, spell immunity, vulnerability to blessed crossbow bolts; AL LE; SV Fort +12, Ref +11, Will +10; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 17.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +17 (or +21 if reading an opponent's mind), Concentration +11, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +17 (or +21 if reading opponent's mind, or +27 if using alternate form, or +31 if doing both), Hide +8, Intimidate +5, Listen +17, Move Silently +19, Perform (ballad, chant, dance, drama, epic, lute, mime, poetry, song) +12, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +8, Spot +18; Alertness, Dodge, Expertise, Power Attack.

Alternate Form (Su): Bhishana can assume any humanoid form, or revert to her natural form, as a standard action. This ability is similar to the alter self spell (caster level 18th), but she can remain in the new form indefinitely.

Detect Thoughts (Su): Bhishana can continuously detect thoughts as the spell (caster level 18th; save DC 20). She can suppress or resume this ability as a free action.

Outsider Traits: Bhishana has darkvision (60-foot range). She cannot be raised or resurrected (though a wish or miracle spell can restore life).

Spell Immunity (Su): Bhishana ignores the effects of spells and spell-like abilities of 8th level or lower, just as if the spellcaster had failed to overcome spell resistance.

Vulnerability to Blessed Crossbow Bolts (Ex): Any hit scored with a blessed crossbow bolt instantly slays Bhishana.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/7/6/3; save DC 13 + spell level): 0—*dancing lights, daze, detect magic, ghost sound, mage hand, open/close, prestidigitation, read magic*; 1st—*charm person, cure light wounds, hypnotism, magic missile, shield, true strike*; 2nd—*cat's grace, protection from arrows, web*; 3rd—*haste, lightning bolt*; 4th—*charm monster.*

WRAPPING UP

If the heroes have defeated CrushStone and Bhishana Bhaga, the adventure ends with them receiving the undying gratitude of the gnomes and their family and friends. If the characters are looking for a base of operations of their own, the Tiger's Palace may serve them well, especially with a shipment of high-quality furnishings on its way (though the shipment hasn't been paid for yet—the characters may need to go on a few more adventures just to be able to settle the potential bill).

If CrushStone got away, he's unlikely to make plans against the heroes. He is still addicted, however, and could well become the henchman for another of the PCs' foes. If Bhishana Bhaga escaped, she's certain to come after the heroes. If they've defeated her once, however, she'll be very cautious about facing them in the future. She's likely to find other creatures they've angered in the past and form a coalition to destroy them.

And either way, the heroes are likely to begin hearing stories of how they overcame an evil outsider. Not only are they likely to receive requests for aid from other besieged communities, but they've drawn the attention of new potential foes as well. The characters are moving into the ranks of the most powerful heroes, and if they hadn't developed a reputation before, they're sure to do so now.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Owen Kirker Clifford Stephens was born in 1970 in Norman, Okla. He attended the TSR Writer's Workshop held at the Wizards of the Coast Game Center in 1997, and his first professional work to actually see the light of day (an article on elven names) was published shortly afterward in issue 250 of DRAGON® magazine.

Owen moved with his wife and three cats to the Seattle area in 2000 after accepting a job as a game designer at Wizards of the Coast. While there he worked on numerous *Star Wars* RPG projects and the *Wheel of Time Roleplaying Game*. Fourteen months later he returned to Oklahoma and picked up his freelance career. He has written several d20 freelance projects since, including the *EverQuest Role-Playing Game* from White Wolf. Owen now works out of an office converted from a garage—surrounded by books, computers, and cats.

Owen loves hearing from other gamers. You can reach him at <OStephens@aol.com>.

Bhishana Bhaga's Tactics

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Bhishana saves other spell use for particularly effective moments, using the caverns to her advantage when targeting either *web* or her *lightning bolt*. She's likely to save at least one *web* to cover herself in retreat if she seems overmatched. In general she won't try more than one *charm monster* spell, since she knows it does nothing if a target makes its saving throw.

XP Adjustment: Bhishana Bhaga is considered CR 10 because she casts spells as a sorcerer one level higher than a typical rakshasa (representing her great experience and increased power). She also has twice as many Hit Dice as a typical rakshasa, so any experience point award for dealing with her should be doubled.